

# THE GREEN SCENE

August, 2008

## Walk it Off! Under the Moon and Stars

Walking is the easiest, most beneficial form of exercise to improve cardiovascular health, weight and mental health, so why not enjoy all of those benefits while strolling under the stars on a warm breezy night for a "Moonlight Walk" at one of Los Angeles County's 90 community, local and regional parks? Everyone can get in on the nighttime fun during our *Walk It Off!* campaign promotion. Visitors can leisurely walk and enjoy a star-filled botanical or geological experience at any of these natural locations while gaining the advantages of exercise.

To see some evening lunar beauty, visit the beautiful Descanso Gardens, located in La Canada Flintridge, California for their "**Descanso Gardens at Night**" walking tour, after dark Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, starting at 7:15 p.m. Led by docent staff, participants must be at least 12 years old, should wear sensible shoes, and bring a jacket and flashlight. Space is limited so early registration is recommended. Fees: \$15 (\$10 Descanso members). To register, call (818) 949-7980 or online at:

[www.descansogardens.org](http://www.descansogardens.org).

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation has numerous walking programs year-round including educational bird walks, historical hikes and senior walking clubs.

To find out more information visit our website at [www.parks.lacounty.gov](http://www.parks.lacounty.gov) this summer, and get out there and "**Walk it Off!**"



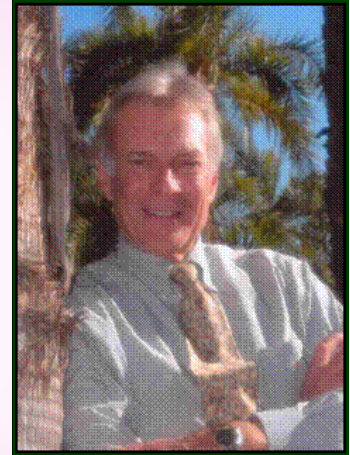
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## Greetings from the Director

Wherever you are in Los Angeles County, you are not more than a few minutes from one of our beautiful parks where you can walk through sylvan settings with hillside, desert or lake views and catch the sounds of balls cracking against bats and children laughing at play. Some parks are an oasis in the midst of urban traffic and noise; others are cathedrals of tall trees where every murmur is muted and the daily rush seems miles and miles away... but all of them have walkways or trails and offer a variety of pleasant and painless ways to walk off the weight, the worries or just the weariness of the day.

I hope you take our Play for Life! campaign's urge to *Walk it Off!* literally and enjoy what the department has to offer.



*Russ Guiney, Director*

## Fun Facts About Our Parks

- Oscar De La Hoya trained as a youth at the Eastside Eddie Heredia Boxing Club.
- Tennis superstar siblings Venus & Serena Williams practiced at Victoria Park when they were kids.
- Belvedere Park houses the second deepest skate bowl in the state of California.
- One of the largest urban parks in Los Angeles, Kenneth Hahn Park has been referred by some as "L.A.'s Central Park".
- In 1975, a first grader won a contest to rename the Southeast Valinda Park. The chosen name "Sunshine" was picked simply because it sounded cheery. La Puente has been the home of Sunshine Park ever since.
- In 1946, popular 1940s and 1950s actor Dennis Morgan and honorary mayor of La Crescenta worried about children not having a place to play. He felt that any child that had to play in the streets already had two strikes against them with their third strike being getting hit by a car. Thus the name of Two Strike Park in La Crescenta.



## Recreational Wisdom

The Department of Parks and Recreation has some of Los Angeles County's most loyal employees. It's not often that these unsung heroes are thrust into the lime light and recognized for their leadership and commitment to our parks. Three of those employees work as Regional Recreation Assistant Directors for the South Community Services Agency and together have devoted an astounding 106 years of service to this department. These employees demonstrate their positive impact by just enjoying what they do and doing it well.

### **Earmer Carden** **Assistant Regional Recreation Director** **El Camino District**

- **How many years of service do you have?** 30 years.
- **What inspired you to start a career in recreation?** After going through the LAPD Academy and becoming a Reserve Police Officer, I decided that I did not want to become a Police Officer, so I began to work for Parks and Recreation in which I have a Bachelor's Degree from Tennessee State University.
- **What's your most memorable moment in this department?** When I was nominated the Employee of the Year for the entire County. I did not get the Award, but I went to Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich's office to receive a scroll.
- **What keeps you going?** My love for planning programs and working with people.
- **What lessons have you learned?** To make sure that I learn as much as I could about the Policies and Procedures, and to document all pertinent information.
- **What has changed the most since you started in the department?** Changes in directors and other administrative positions, salaries, benefit plans, and most importantly the goals and directions of the Department.
- **What's your favorite thing about your job?** Training staff and planning special events.
- **When do you plan to retire?** When the job is no longer interesting to me.
- **Who is the most famous person you've ever worked with?** Cookie and Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy, Darryl Strawberry, Eric Davis, and more.



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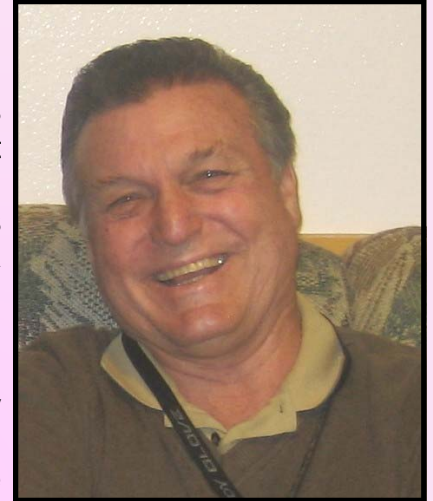


## Recreational Wisdom

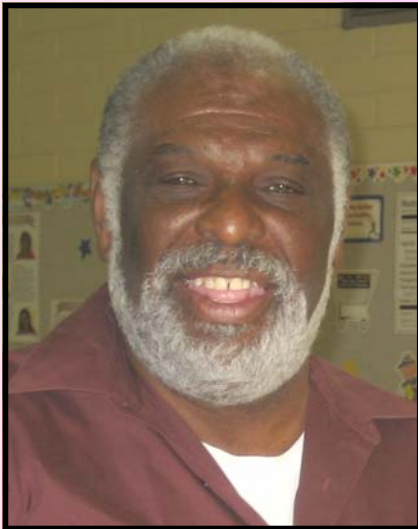
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### Kenneth Hopper Assistant Regional Recreation Director Southeast District

- **How many years of service do you have?** 38 Years
- **What inspired you to start a career in recreation?** I was Parks & Recreation Director in High School for Student Government Day.
- **What's your most memorable moment in this department?** Employee of the month for the Department & the County, April 1995.
- **What keeps you going?** October, 2009 Retirement date. (And the love for my team and what we do)
- **What lessons have you learned?** Enjoy life, and family always comes first.
- **What's your favorite thing about your job?** We change lives, everything we do builds people up, makes them happy & healthier.
- **When do you plan to retire?** 13 months, 8 days, 4 hrs, 43 sec. (But who's counting)
- **Who is the most famous person you've ever worked with?** Tommy Lasorda.



### Art Jones Assistant Regional Recreation Director Florence/Firestone District



- **How many years of service do you have?** 38 years.
- **What inspired you to start a career in recreation?** A friend got me involved and I really like people.
- **What's your most memorable moment in this department?** There are many, however the most memorable was taking a group of kids to a jazz festival and getting them out of their comfort zone and exposing them to something new.
- **What keeps you going?** Knowing there is a need in our community for recreational activities and providing recreational activities for the entire family.
- **What lessons have you learned?** That people are people, no matter what ethnic groups they come from and that their needs are the same.
- **What's your favorite thing about your job?** The ability to see people grow, to see kids come into the program and get involved.
- **When do you plan to retire?** Within the next year!
- **Who is the most famous person you've ever worked with?** Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke.

**Al Evans**  
**Assistant Regional Recreation Director**  
**North Agency**

When Al Evans, the new Assistant Regional Recreation Director for the North Agency, fervidly tells you that youth need team sports to gain self-discipline, social skills, motivation and concern for others, you know he believes it. His love for the outdoors is derived from years of roaming the hills of his native Tennessee, and his devotion to youth – not to mention a fine sense of humor - comes perhaps from raising six children of his own. The fact remains that few people bring the wealth of professional experience, documented successes and tireless effort to the recreation division that Al does, particularly where youth are concerned. From his days with the city of Los Angeles where he worked on issues involving gangs and graffiti, through his efforts as adult sports coordinator for the city of Cypress to the years he has devoted to our Department, both in the east and in the north, Al has been a model of passionate commitment and effective communications with community groups, elected officials, recreation staff and especially youth.



Once his time and efforts went into such programs as a Youth Camping Program that introduced inner-city youth to camping and another where he coached an East L.A. basketball team all the way to the Junior Olympics. Now, those early efforts at a single park have given way to developing innovative and useful programs within many parks and to energetically promoting community outreach efforts among the entire recreation staff of the North Agency. He sums up his goals with "I'm driven to creating excellent programs and facilities that exceed the public's recreational expectations. It can be done with team-building and effective and responsible leadership."

**Susie Hsi**  
**Assistant Regional Recreation Director**  
**East Los Angeles and South Whittier District**



Susie Hsi started working in the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1981 as a lifeguard. She worked during the summers while going to college. After college she worked full time until she was appointed to Area Pool Supervisor. She was promoted to Aquatics Manager in 1997 where she supervised the East Agency's 10 public swimming pools.

In September 2007 she was promoted to Assistant Regional Recreation Director for the East Los Angeles and South Whittier District. Susie has received numerous awards for her involvement with different organizations including the Southern California Municipal Athletic Federation and she also received a scroll from the city of Temple City.



**Sofia Gavia**  
**Franklin D. Roosevelt Park Superintendent**

Sofia Gavia began her journey as a Los Angeles County employee in the Department of Parks and Recreation 11 years ago. Her enthusiasm and hard work have made her a positive symbol of the Department and in the Florence-Firestone area. Sofia has been instrumental in bringing educational programs and informational events such as college fairs, health fairs, sports clinics, and emergency preparedness events to Roosevelt Park.

Sofia has also been a member of the Florence-Firestone Community Enhancement Team for five years. Sofia's passion and dedication for excellence motivates her staff, which in turn, motivates the park's patrons, and as a result, harmony is created in to community. Her endeavors have not gone unnoticed, as she was recently promoted as Franklin D. Roosevelt Park's Superintendent. Sofia Gavia truly exemplifies the Department's motto, "Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs."



**Melinda Mayoral**  
**Assistant Regional Director**



Melinda Mayoral has been part of the Department of Parks and Recreation for 23 years and during that time she has impacted the lives of the people who live in the communities she serves by developing programs that are specifically targeted to the needs of individuals and groups. Melinda is part of the original committee responsible for Supervisor Antonovich's annual "Remembering our Veterans and their Families, Past, Present and Future." She has developed a very close relationship with all the departments and organizations that participate in the event. Two other programs that have grown both in size and popularity in the San Gabriel Valley District Parks, under Melinda's leadership are the Cheer and County Capers programs. One of her most recent accomplishments was the Solar Boat Competition; despite not having any experience in the area of boat construction, the team not only made a solar-powered boat but it also won the Rookie category.

What Melinda enjoys more about her job is watching the people she works with grow into great recreational professionals. Melinda has a Bachelors of Science in Recreation Administration from Cal Poly Pomona and she is currently the Assistant Regional Recreation Director for the San Gabriel District Parks.

**Los Angeles County Park Youth Soccer Team Honored by  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
*Team will represent U.S. in Paris, France***



Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke recently honored Carver Park's youth soccer team in South Los Angeles during a Board of Supervisor's meeting. Team FC Barcelona is a group of 10 to 12 year-olds who recently won the Dannon Invitational Cup at the Cerritos Memorial Challenge on Memorial Day Weekend. Each player was presented a

scroll and recognized for the history-making win! The team will be the second team in U.S. history to attend the Danone Nations Cup in Paris France.

Team FC Barcelona scored the winning goal (2 to 1) against the Stampede Legends and beat out 20 other teams throughout California and Nevada. They will now represent the United States and compete against 40 countries in the Danone Nations Cup, September 4-7 in Paris, France. They are the only U.S. team in their age group that will compete for the title of Best Youth Soccer Team. The team of 14 players will continue training at Carver Park every Monday and Wednesday until they leave for the competition. In addition to being a sporting competition that promotes physical exercise and gives thousands of children the chance to make their dreams come true, the Danone Nations Cup is also a charitable event.

The entire team and coaching staff will be sponsored by The Dannon Company for an all expense paid trip to attend the championship.





## Walking Toward Good Health!

We are all familiar with basketball teams, tennis clubs, water aerobic classes and other fun fitness activities, but recently a new trend has taken over at many of our parks, Walking Clubs! Some of these clubs have more than 50 members, ready to get healthy and have some fun; all you need is a good pair of sneakers and a comfortable outfit.

The number of walking clubs at our parks continues to grow. Currently at the South Community Services Agency there are eight walking clubs. One of the most popular walking clubs is located at Kenneth Hahn Regional Park. This walking club was established in 2004 following a suggestion from past park Superintendent Anthony Miles. "There would be about 20 of us walking separately each day" said Kenneth Hahn Park Walking Club President Melvin Derden, "we took Mr. Miles suggestion seriously and formed a club so that we could keep an eye on the trails and report unsafe conditions." Today the walking club has 320 members and has four walking programs, including a moonlight walk once a month during a full moon. The Kenneth Hahn Walking Club meets every third Wednesday of the month at the Kenneth Hahn Park meeting room. In addition to walking, the club hosts many fundraisers for non-profit organizations such as the Los Angeles County Foster Care Program.

Walking Clubs are completely free to join, and in addition to meeting great people benefits of walking can include weight loss, controlling blood pressure, and decreasing the risk of a heart attack. Walking can add years to your life, reduce your risk of breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, and boost your "good" cholesterol. Research states that 35 percent of those in their 50's and 60's are likely to live an additional eight years if they walk regularly.

The list of benefits from walking goes on and on. Many other studies indicate a daily brisk walk also can help:

- Prevent depression, colon cancer, constipation, osteoporosis, and impotence
- Lengthen lifespan
- Lower stress levels
- Relieve arthritis and back pain
- Strengthen muscles, bones, and joints
- Improve sleep
- Elevate overall mood and sense of well-being

So get out there and *Walk it Off!*





## Department Awards Update



The National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO) honored the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation with three awards during this year's annual conference.

This year's Department of Parks and Recreation winners are:

- 🏆 James McCarthy, in the category of Parks and Recreation Program Fellow Award
- 🏆 The Urban Reforestation Program, led by Jim Park, from which more than 9,000 trees have been planted at parks
- 🏆 The Aquatic Adventure Camp, which involves a collaboration between our aquatics division, nature centers and Cal State University Northridge

NACPRO is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties and its awards program is intended to recognize and honor excellence in county park and recreation endeavors throughout the nation and to share honoree best practice ideas with other counties. The award recognizes member agencies for successful park and recreation facilities, programs, environmental/conservation initiatives, historical/cultural projects, and barrier-removing initiatives as well as honoring dedicated public officials, outstanding professional staff and extraordinary volunteer efforts.

The Department also received two awards from the National Association of Counties for:

- 🏆 The Parent Project
- 🏆 CSI Camp.

The Parent Project was formed in October 2005 in response to a growing number of gang violence in the Salazar Park neighborhood of East Los Angeles. Wayward teenagers needed guidance and discipline. The Parent Project was designed to train and teach parents effective communication and parenting skills to confront the issues at home, one-on-one. The Parent Project was implemented by a collaborative that includes the Department of Parks and Recreation, District Attorney's Office, East L.A. Sheriff's Department, Probation, Juvenile Courts, Eastlake Courts and the community organization Eastside Boys and Girls Club. On Wednesday, July 9, 2008 Albert Gomez was also honored for his work with at-risk children through the Parent Project at the Hall of Administration by the InterAgency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN). The Parent Project coaches parents with valuable communication and parenting skills to deal with their at-risk children. Albert teaches the 10-week program from which over 560 parents have graduated from.

The CSI camp is a six-week crime scene investigation program that focuses on crime scene reconstruction, tracking, bomb disposal, arson investigation, fingerprinting and DNA Analysis. The CSI Camp's mission is two-fold: to strengthen community ties with law enforcement in a interesting and creative manner, and expose young people in South Los Angeles to potential career choices.

# HIGH FIVE!

For Those Who Go Above and Beyond...



Thank you for sponsoring the Knabe Cup. Year in and year out it has been a great tournament and this year was no exception.

Jack Hastert, SJB Golf Coach  
Saint John Bosco High School

Thank you for all you do and your staff to make the Cerritos Kids Fishing Derby a success. Your staff did an exceptional job at working with my staff to ensure this event was as wonderful as it was. Special thanks to Joe Mendoza, Angel Baltazar and her staff, and Dingo Mercado who always go that extra mile.

Don Knabe  
Supervisor, Fourth District  
County of Los Angeles

Dear Mr. Guiney,

Hello! How are you? Thank you!

I really enjoyed golf camp because I loved putting and the driving range 100% for the chipping 25%. Thank you for letting us borrow equipment because we don't have any. It was fun. So thank you again.

Sincerely,  
Vanadium (One of the students)

P.S. Let the coaches and the supervisor see this

The Junior Golf Program was great for my 4-year old twins, because it helps build their esteem. The instructors are excellent, patient and very experienced. We would not have the chance to take golf if it wasn't for this program. Thank you.

Mrs. Lisa Romo

This week was my daughter's introduction to golf and the Junior Golf Program proved to be more than expected! I am certain that the instructor's enthusiasm for the game transferred to my daughter. I sincerely hope that this will serve as a new passion for my daughter...

Lisa Johnson

## COMING NEXT MONTH:

- Culture Shock! Month
- Artistic Employees... and more!

## GIVE Someone a HIGH FIVE!

Do you know someone in our department who deserves special recognition? Maybe you were on a tight deadline and that person helped you meet it. Maybe you were having a tough work day and that person helped you beat it. You know who those people are, the ones who go above and beyond. Help us recognize them. Email their name and a short paragraph of why they deserve a High Five! to [iperius@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:iperius@parks.lacounty.gov) and we'll do our best to include them in the High Five! column of The Green Scene.



## County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

Yvonne B. Burke  
Chair  
Second District

Gloria Molina  
First District

Zev Yaroslavsky  
Third District

Don Knabe  
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich  
Fifth District

## Department of Parks and Recreation

Russ Guiney  
Director

John Wicker  
Chief Deputy Director

Kaye Michelson  
Special Assistant

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Imee Gacad Perius  
Editor

Brenda Sanchez  
Assistant Editor

## Contributing Writers

Joyce Fitzpatrick  
Alba Ibarra  
Catarah Hampshire  
Maeve McConnell  
Joann Diaz

433 South Vermont Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90020  
(213) 738-2961

[iperius@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:iperius@parks.lacounty.gov)

<http://lacounty.info/>  
<http://lacountyparks.org>

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